



INTRODUCTION

Let the group share on experiences about a time when they did something that they knew to be wrong.
 -How did you feel?
 -What was in your mind? What did you do afterward?
 - Have you talked about this experience to someone?

Encourage each one to be open. Point out that it is natural to be afraid and hide the wrong done because it is the consequence of sin. But we cannot hide it from God. Let us talk about how God looks at us when we have done something wrong.
 Our Gospel reading today talks about this. Let's listen carefully.



OPENING PRAYER

Christ my Savior, your wounds tell me of the suffering I have caused you.
 Have mercy on me and wash me with your blood.
 Cleanse me from my wrongdoings.
 Heal the wounds in my soul, caused by sins
 May I experience your unending mercy every day.
 And share your great love for me to everyone.
 Amen. Glory be.



PHASE ONE REMEMBER THE STORY OF JESUS

1.1 Proclamation of the Gospel Story John 3: 14-21 (Enthroned the Bible on a table with lighted candle)

A moment of prayerful silence

We will not be able to understand the Word of God unless God himself opens our hearts. Let us now welcome Jesus as he speaks to us through his Word

Gospel Acclamation:

Ginhigugma gud han Diyos an kalibutan, nga iginhatag niya an iya bugtong nga Anak, basi diri unta mamatay an ngatana nga nasarig ha iya, kundi makaangkon han dayon nga kinabuhi.

(For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life)



14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. 20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 21 But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord

All reply: Praise to you Lord Jesus

1.2 Brief Guided silent Meditation / Personal Prayer

- What does this Gospel reading tell us about why Jesus came into the world? (to save the world)
- How does Jesus do this? (through his death and Resurrection, by exposing and then forgiving our sins.)

1.3 Text in Context

The Gospel story tells us about Jesus speaking personally to Nicodemus. His deep feeling to discover the truth moves him to meet Jesus away from the crowd. Nicodemus is an authority of the Jewish religion and should not be seen with Jesus who are rejected by the Jewish leaders. Yet he courageously listens to Jesus who reveals him who God is in his very person. John, the Gospel writer, beautifully tells us the truth of God by the use of images like darkness and light.

1. What is the story about serpent from the Old Testament? When the Israelites were getting worn out from the journey in the desert, they complained to God. As a punishment for their sinfulness, God sent poisonous serpent to bite the people, and many of them died. But God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole. All who had been bitten would be healed if they gazed upon the bronze serpent. (Numbers 21:80)
2. What is the importance of Moses and the bronze serpent in understanding about the message of Jesus? As the bronze serpent is lifted up by Moses, so is Christ be lifted up (rising from the dead). Anyone who believes in Christ will not only be healed but will gain eternal life.
3. What did Jesus tell us about God from this particular Gospel reading?
4. What is your understanding of this line: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*
5. What do most people tend to do? Who are those in darkness? Who are those in the light?
6. What does Jesus want to tell us about the light?

**PHASE II REFLECT the Story
of the Church
(Teachings of the Church)**



This Fourth Week of Lent is traditionally called Laetare Sunday, coming from the Latin entrance for the Mass of the day. "*Laetare Jerusalem*"
(Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast. Isaiah 66:10)

The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus gives us a great truth of who God is from the mouth of Jesus: The Gospel message today calls for rejoicing.

The story of Adam and Eve tells how God's goodness is distorted by our first parents' going against his divine plan. The Bible stories show us that their fall into sin is repeated by many generations such as in the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah, and Kings of Israel. God is merciful. He continuously cares for his people Israel in spite of their sinful generation. God walks with his people. He made promises to Abraham to give them hope as people. He gave the law to Moses to guide them in their relationships with God and to one another. He made his wishes and thoughts known to prophets when they go wrong. God does not want to give up Israel. Like a father to a rebellious child, God punishes but only to evoke in them a desire to return to him. His love for Israel is *so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice.* (Deus Caritas Est # 10)

The great love story of Israel and God is our own story, too. God cannot bear to see us in sinful condition. He does not want destruction for us. He would do everything to bring us back to him. He does not allow sin to overpower our world. The mercy of the Father has no limit to the extent of his Son dying for us. God loves us so much, to the point of seeing his beloved Son tortured to a shameful death.

Let us believe Jesus who speaks to us today in these words:
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Jn 3:16

The world that God loves so much is none other than *YOU and I*, and all the good things around us. God created us in his own image and likeness. Out of his kindness, he makes us sharers of his divine life- to be with him forever in heaven (in big word "eternal life")

God is rich in mercy and compassion. God comes to us in the form of mercy. He does not come to judge and punish us, but to save us through the death of Christ on the Cross

- In Christ, God brings forgiveness.
- In Christ, light has come to the world, darkened by sin.
- In Christ, we look beyond to eternal life.
- In Christ, we are saved.

Let us try to spend some time looking at the Cross in silence, to look at the wounds, to look at the heart of Jesus, to look at it all: Christ Crucified, the Son of God, annihilated, humiliated... out of love. (Pope Francis)

Christ's dying on the cross has saved us (salvation). Unfortunately, people choose darkness and hide in sin. God does not condemn sinners. But some have chosen death for themselves. God gives us the capacity to make choices. We have the freewill to choose what is good or evil.

The light of goodness will always prevail. Christ is the eternal light which will never get dim. Christ has been lifted up on the cross. By his cross, we are all saved (redemption)

Only one thing is necessary: **Receive God's mercy in faith.** Let us not waste the mercy of God. God is offering it to us now. We are challenged to be responsible of our own life's choices. God has never left us alone. Christ himself has done it and has shown us the surest way.

Let us be convinced of the great love of God in Christ. Have an intent gaze on the crucifix. Reflect on these questions sincerely, not only now but in daily life.
- *Do I walk in the light or do I walk in the darkness?*
- *Am I a child of God or have I ended up choosing darkness of sin?*

**PHASE THREE RESPOND – with/ in my personal
faith /community faith story**

We have talked about the great love of God by sending us Christ who died for our sins.

What can I do in return so I can become the person that God wants me to be? How shall I spend the remaining days of Lent, so I can be ready to enter the mystery of the Holy Week.



CLOSING PRAYER

Help the group to find a quiet place. Allow some time for quiet reflection.

Now, let us thank Christ for his mercy and forgiveness. Let us open our hearts to Christ and allow his light to heal us.

(pause)

Leader: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: May the Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and lead us to life everlasting Amen

BACKGROUND FOR THE CATECHISTS

CCC 1846 The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners.¹¹³ The angel announced to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."¹¹⁴ The same is true of the Eucharist, the sacrament of redemption: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

CCC 1847 "God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us."¹¹⁶ To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"

YOUCAT 337 No man can save himself. Christians believe that they are saved by God, who for this purpose sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world. For us salvation means that we are freed by the Holy Spirit from the power of sin and have been brought back from the realm of death to a life without end in God's presence.

